

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No.

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic 408 Great Falls Road

other

2. Location

street and number 408 Great Falls Road

city, town Rockville

vicinity

county Montgomery

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Elizabeth W. Nicholson

street and number 408 Great Falls Road

telephone 301-762-2783

city, town Rockville

state Maryland

zip code 20350

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County

liber 3097 folio 288

city, town Rockville

tax map GR22

tax parcel P667

tax ID number 00205097

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
☐ Other: _____

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count		
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> domestic	<input type="checkbox"/> social	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> unknown		
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use		
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> other:		

Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory

7. Description

Inventory No.

Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This brick-veneer two-story, three-bay Colonial Revival house was built c. 1940. The enclosed area includes approximately 1,600 square feet, not including basement or attic space. It has a slate side-gabled roof and a brick veneer foundation. There are porches on each side and an exterior brick chimney on the left side. A built-in two-car garage is accessed on the right side at the basement level.

The symmetrical front façade faces northwest toward Great Falls Road and is deeply set on its 1.5-acre lot. The center six-panel wood door has a decorative architrave with hood and fluted pilasters. Single 1/1, double-hung vinyl-sash windows flank the door on the first floor. Each has six-light snap-in grilles and fiberglass shutters. There are three vinyl-sash double-hung windows on the second story. Two are directly above the first floor windows and have 8/8 snap-in grilles. A smaller four-light vinyl-sash double-hung window is directly above the door. The cornice, vergeboard and soffit appear to be clad with aluminum.



Front and
West
Elevations



The west elevation includes an enclosed porch on the first floor above a basement-level two-car garage. The porch framing is clad with aluminum siding. The front and rear walls of the porch each contain a triple double-hung 6/6 vinyl-sash window. The west façade of the porch has two of these triple windows. The porch is accessed from the interior space via a multi-light wood door. The second floor contains a 12-light door that accesses the rooftop of the porch. This roof has a two-rail balustrade along the perimeter. There is also a 1/1 double-hung vinyl-sash window with six-light snap-in grilles. A smaller window is located in the apex of the gable. Each opening is flanked by synthetic shutters. Cornice returns and vergeboards are sheathed with aluminum. The submerged garage has a full-width overhead door.

The rear elevation has a nine-light door which is contained within a small shed-roofed screened porch. Windows are double-hung, vinyl-sash. A shed dormer breaks the rear slope of the roof and is clad in aluminum siding with a standing seam metal roof. There are three double-hung vinyl-sash windows in the dormer.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 7 Page 1



East (porch)
and Rear
Elevations



The first floor of the left (east) elevation is taken up by a wood-framed screened porch and a brick exterior end chimney. The porch is accessed by doors that flank the fireplace in the living room. The chimney is flanked by a wood door and a double-hung vinyl-sash window on the second story.

The center hall first floor plan includes a living room with fireplace. The living room extends the full length of the house on this left side of the entrance hall. Exterior doors, symmetrically placed on either side of the fireplace, open onto the screened porch. To the right of the entry hall, the dining room and kitchen occupy the right side of the house. The entry hall includes a stairway with a winder 4/5 of the way up and a narrow hall which leads to a coat closet. The second floor includes three bedrooms and a full bath, arranged along the stair hall.

Aerial photograph
showing locations and
surroundings of

406 Great Falls Road
408 Great Falls Road



8. Significance

Inventory No. _____

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

Specific dates	Architect/Builder	Browner Harding, Builder
Construction dates c.1940		

Evaluation for:

<input type="checkbox"/> National Register	<input type="checkbox"/> Maryland Register	<input type="checkbox"/> not evaluated
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Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

Statement of Significance

The house at 408 Great Falls Road is an example of revival-style period architectural design. The original environmental setting is intact, as is its massing and its footprint. The windows have been replaced with vinyl-sash, but the openings have not been changed. The house illustrates the early incorporation of a garage into the body of a house. Both 406 and 408 Great Falls Road are remnants of the large and elaborate Rockville Heights subdivision, being built on originally platted lots in the 1930's. The Nicholson homes are historic markers of the Rockville Heights subdivision, before it was resubdivided and developed with split levels and ranch style homes. These two properties are associated with the Nicholson and Trail families, both large and prominent families, each with a long presence in Rockville and Montgomery County.

History and Support

The Rockville Heights subdivision was platted in 1890, with large lots, parks, boulevards and circles in anticipation of attracting upscale residential development. This subdivision created Maryland Avenue, Argyle Avenue, and Monument Street. Other rights-of-way, including Polk Street, and Florida and New York Avenues were later abandoned. The Rockville Heights subdivision was similar to the platted West End Park subdivision (1890), and to the first subdivision in East Rockville called Reading's First Addition to Rockville (1888). All of these subdivisions were platted with generous lots and picturesque roads, in the time-honored fashion of the late 19th century garden suburbs being built nationwide. All of these subdivisions were viewed as largely unsuccessful because they developed slowly. Many of the platted lots in all of these subdivisions remained vacant until well into the 20th century, and this is part of the history of the development of City of Rockville.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M

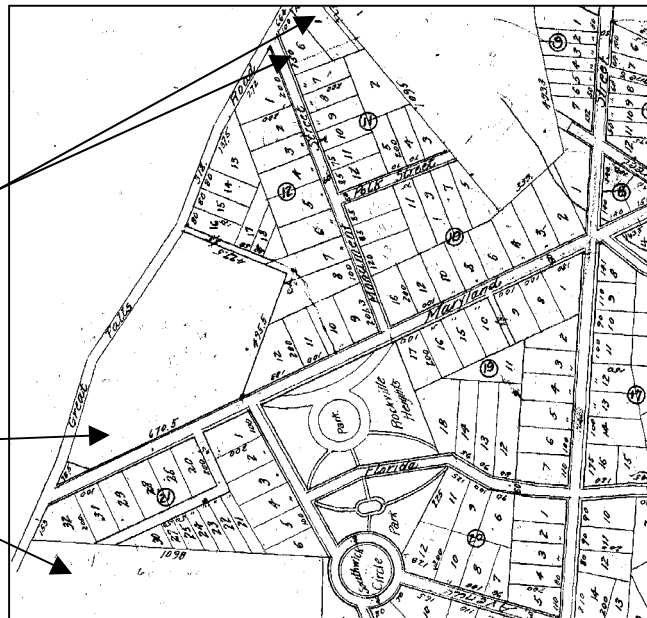
Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

Detail from plat entered into land records
as Rockville Heights at Liber JA19, folio
285, surveyed in 1889-1890

Platted lots for 406 Great Falls Road
(right) and 408 Great Falls Road (left).

Trail property located here



The land for both 406 and 408 Great Falls Road was purchased by James Brawner Nicholson and his wife Mary Trail Nicholson from John Maury Dove and his wife Nannie Carter Dove according to deeds recorded on January 3, 1913 and on January 26, 1923.¹ J. Maury Dove moved to Washington, DC after selling the last of his Great Falls Road property to the Nicholsons and he died in 1924. His wife, a native of Rockville, died in 1929 in D.C. and is buried in Rock Creek Cemetery.²

James Brawner Nicholson was born in 1869, the son of Leonard Lisperard Nicholson and Susan C. Brawner. Leonard lived in Rockville since about 1905. James married Mary Trail at her family's home in Rockville in 1906. Mary Trail was the daughter of Hezekiah and Elizabeth Trail who owned property along Great Falls Road. Hezekiah Trail was born in Rockville in 1845 and he and his wife are buried at Rockville Cemetery. The Nicholsons had four children, one of whom, Elizabeth Brawner Nicholson, died in infancy. The remaining children were James Brawner Nicholson, Jr., William Trail Nicholson and Mary Forest Nicholson. James B. Nicholson, Sr. died in 1932 and is also buried at the Rockville Cemetery. His widow died in 1965.³

¹ Montgomery County Land Records 226/169; 234/46

² Montgomery Sentinel Newspaper, Genealogical Abstracts

³ Nicholson Families, Our Maryland Heritage Series, Book 40, William Neal Hurley, Jr., 2002

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 2

406 (top) and 408
(bottom) Great
Falls Road houses

Detail from 1949 F.H.M. Klinge Atlas of Property in Montgomery County Maryland showing Rose Hill Farm, Rockville Heights, and the Great Falls Road. Trail property is located between Maryland Avenue and Great Falls Road and a 25-acre parcel on the right side of Great Falls Road.



James Brawner Nicholson, Jr. was born October 6, 1908. He married Elizabeth Williams White who was the daughter of Dr. Elijah Wootton White and Florence Pyles in 1936. Their wedding announcement states that they were married in the bride's hometown of Poolesville and that the "bride and groom are well-known in the county and have a host of friends".⁴ Ushers included Charles Beard and William Bouic of Rockville. The couple lived in Washington, D.C. where James Jr. was employed before eventually returning to Rockville. They had no children. James died in 1979 and is buried in Monocacy. His widow, Elizabeth, is 95 years old and resides at a nursing home in Rockville. Her sister, Helen White, presently occupies the house at 408 Great Falls Road.

William Trail Nicholson married Amelia Somervell Farmer, daughter of Robert Watt Farmer of Redland in 1934 at his mother's home on the Trail family farm in Rockville. They did not have any children either.

⁴ Montgomery County Historical Society, Nicholson family file

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M

Name

Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 3

Mary Forest Nicholson married Richard Theodore Culp from Silver Spring in 1943 and they lived in Annapolis. They had two sons, Richard T. Culp, Jr. and James Nicholson Culp. Mary Nicholson Culp still resides in Amberley, Annapolis.

The houses at 406 and 408 Great Falls Road were built for sons William and James Jr., respectively, after their marriages by local builder Brawner Harding. The brothers acquired the land by deed from their widowed mother on October 11, 1941.⁵ Mary Trail Nicholson's Last Will and Testament states that her personal effects were left to her daughter because she had "heretofore given to my said sons substantial sums for the acquisition of their homes."⁶ Mary T. Nicholson also left her three children her 35.774-acre farm on Falls Road (described as 13.334 acres within the City of Rockville and 22.44 acres in Rockville "outside") with single-family dwelling and various outbuildings, as well as her Washington, D.C. property.

Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation data shows that 406 Great Falls Road was built in 1945 and 408 was built in 1941. Both houses appear on the 1949 F.H.M Klinge Atlas of property in Montgomery County. Family history indicates that the houses were built earlier, perhaps in the late 1930s, and that 406 Great Falls Road was built before 408. If this is true, it would indicate that the houses were built before the land was deeded to each brother. According to the family, 408 Great Falls Road was designed by an architect rather than from a pattern book. Friends of the Nicholsons who lived in Poolesville, Charles Elgin and his wife, asked the Nicholsons' for permission to use the plans for their house, although they enlarged it slightly.

The Klinge Atlas shows Polk Street, Florida and New York Avenue still present in 1949. Dr. Dexter Bullard's Rose Hill property was directly across Great Falls Road. There were not many other houses in the immediate vicinity at the time and only a few pre-date the houses at 406 and 408 Great Falls Road. Immediately to the west and across Monument Avenue, 500 Great Falls Road, was built c. 1917 and 402 Great Falls to the immediate east of 406 was built c. 1931. Portions of Rockville Heights were later resubdivided and cul-de-sacs were added off Monument Street and Dale Drive.

⁵ Montgomery County Land Records 857/117; 857/116

⁶ Montgomery County Register of Wills, Case # 15,641, August 15, 1955

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. _____

Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation Records, Montgomery County Plat and Land Records, Montgomery County Register of Wills, 1949 FF.H.M. Klinge Atlas or Real Estate in Montgomery County, City of Rockville Utility Service Records, Nicholson Families/Trail Families, Our Maryland Heritage Series, William Neal Hurley, 2002.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property _____ 1.55 acres _____

Acreage of historical setting _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale: _____

Verbal boundary description and justification

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Cindy Kebba		
organization	City of Rockville	date	November 2005
street & number		telephone	
city or town		state	

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600